

SOCIAL INTERMEDIATION STUDY FIELD RESEARCH GUIDE

*exploring the relationship between social capital and
microfinance.*

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Objectives and Overview of the Social Intermediation Study and this Field Research Guide

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The use of microfinance to enhance income generating opportunities of the poor is a popular tool for governmental as well as non-governmental organisations working to raise standards of living in developing countries. Evidence has shown that women, in particular, have high repayment rates and benefit extensively from local microfinance initiatives.

Increasing attention in recent years has been paid to the ways in which microfinance fosters social capital formation among the poor. The concept of social capital is still evolving and while there is no single agreed definition, one formulation is that social capital refers to the willingness of individuals to cooperate with other individuals and with institutions for a common purpose. Similarly, the World Bank Social Capital Initiative considers social capital as the internal social and cultural coherence of society, the norms and values that interactions among people and the institutions in which they are embedded (foreword to Working Paper No. 1: The Initiative on Defining, Monitoring and Measuring Social Capital). Therefore, like physical, natural and human capital, sustainable growth cannot take place without social capital.

Microfinance can contribute to social capital through social intermediation: peer group development that offsets the need for conventional collateral requirements among poor clients seeking MFI loans. Interaction within MFI groups can create cooperation and trust that not only facilitate microfinance activities, but also contribute benefits beyond loan access itself. Such benefit may include a greater sense of community, trust and reliance on the group in time of crisis, sharing of valuable social and market information, more positive social practices, etc. The networks and norms created by groups are thereby said to be a positive form of social capital, which in turn, can lay building blocks for other social capital development in a community.

These forms of social capital, moreover, are accessible to those generally excluded from or disadvantaged by existing norms and relationships. Women, in particular, are thought to have benefited extensively from the social intermediation processes associated with groups. For example, they may have more access to social interaction or become less dependent on their male relatives. The additional revenue women make from income generating schemes through the MFIs is also believed to give them greater respect and decision making power within the household, as they are contributing a greater share of the household income -- though important exceptions to this have also be documented. This respect, in combination with group activities and discussions with other women, can result in increased confidence, skill building and overall empowerment. In a rural context, group formation and group dynamics can lead to the creation of support systems that build confidence of community women, thus empowering them to be more active in the community, to improve their family situation, to gain access to education, etc. Further, because women are known to spend the majority of their personal income on improving the family situation, these programmes and the ensuing empowerment are a great benefit to the children of poor women, who are generally more likely to attend school and have better health than those of women who are not involved in groups/microfinance initiatives.

Nevertheless, the above observations have also been challenged. Do microfinance initiatives implemented through group lending schemes bring clients benefits over and above those of an individual loan? Are

microfinance groups (as a form of social capital) truly new, positive and additional to the existing institutional landscape? What characteristics distinguish them from other groups, particularly regarding the inclusion of the poorest and most disadvantaged? What are some of the key features and causes of the processes involved?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Through this study, CIDA and AKFC aim to promote a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social capital formation through MFI group lending processes, to determine the added value of group relations to the alleviation of poverty and the empowerment of women in developing countries.

The study explores the **hypothesis** that the social intermediation processes of MFIs are necessary to extend their outreach to and within poorer segments of the population, particularly women, and have a separate value in and of themselves by positively enhancing the social capital of the participants.

Through six **case studies**, conducted in four countries using a comparable framework, this study will explore the relationship between social capital and group formation in microfinance initiatives. Two case studies will take place in India, two in Pakistan, one in Kenya and one in Mali. It is recognised that each team will need to refine questions based on local context and local languages, however, a common methodology will create a basis for comparison between the studies and allow for a comprehensive synthesis. It is hoped that this comparative approach, as well as each case study itself, will provide a learning opportunity for the MFI and researchers involved, and supply a basis for further enquiry into this area of development. A final publication of findings for dissemination to the international community is envisioned that synthesises the field research, and provides recommendations for programme enhancement and future study. It will aim to be of use to NGO programme developers and academics alike, shedding light on an under examined but important area of microfinance impact assessment.

KEY THEMES OF THE STUDY

There are **five key themes** that will be woven through the study, which are also expected to form the main sections of the working paper of each case study:

- i. Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction
- ii. Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skills Building
- iii. Leveraging Power of Groups
- iv. Investigating Ex-clients and Dormant Groups
- v. Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

Each of these individual areas has been designed with a purpose and relates back to assessing the validity of the main hypothesis. A brief description of these sections and that relationship will be provided here in order to give a familiarity with the overall study and the essential themes that run through this field research guide.

I Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction

The first area, “**Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction**”, explores the idea that through group lending schemes, social interaction amongst members occurs that would otherwise not have taken place and this interaction provides the poor with a network that leads to empowerment. Through their group they are able to share valuable information about events in and around the community, they are able to build

solidarity relationships and rely on each other during times of difficulty and they are able to talk to each other about social concerns that they may have and share experiences to resolve household problems. These believed benefits of the group go beyond those of micro-credit schemes and provide added benefits that are thought to lead to the further empowerment of the poor.

Rural microfinance programmes in developing countries have traditionally been primarily aimed at income generation and poverty alleviation. It has been found, however, that alongside these economic advances are social benefits that are equally, if not more, important to rural women's empowerment. The increased interaction of women through microfinance initiatives (MFIs) can create solidarity, co-operation, and trust. Additionally, the consensus building and democratic structure of many groups coupled with the increased economic security resulting from the MFIs can lead to confidence and skill building among the women involved.

The questions under this theme seek to measure the social networks built by MFI groups and women's perception of their relationships with other members. Do they feel that they can rely on their fellow group members in times of difficulty? Do they trust the other members of their group and how was that trust formed? Does the existence of the group facilitate information dissemination and group interaction that would have not otherwise occurred? Is there a sense of belonging or community within the MFI group? Through these themes, the study seeks to understand how these bonds of social interaction (social capital) are formed, their causes and their implications for the empowerment of women and the development of the wider community.

II Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skill Building

Area two, "**Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skill Building**", expands upon theme one, examining the skills and confidence members, particularly women, develop from their interaction in the group setting and their involvement in decision making, leading group meetings and organising group affairs. This section tests the increased skills developed by the poor beyond those that relate solely to credit access and loan programmes and deals more with social capital, particularly with respect to changes in attitudes towards gender relations and acceptable behaviour for men and women.

It is believed that through microfinance initiatives (MFIs), women gain not only financial security but also social confidence and are empowered to become more independent and better equipped to improve their family situation. These changes are catalysed through the provision of independent sources of income for women which lessens their economic dependency on their husbands; through their exposure through MFIs to diverse values and ideas that increase women's awareness of their rights; and through the augmented status of women both in the household and the community due to their significant contribution to household resources, thus according them more decision making power.

This study hypothesises that in addition to the above (which could characterise both individual and group-based lending), microfinance initiatives that use group lending projects further develop social relations between group members to create what is known as social capital.

This section of the study seeks to measure to what degree social and gender relations have changed since the formation of MFI groups and if the social intermediation processes of MFIs do, in fact, positively enhance the social capital of the women involved in these programmes. It will also be important to get a sense of the internal structure of groups, and their own internal governance and accountability issues.

III Leveraging Power of Groups

The “**Leveraging Power of Groups**” in area three further examines the importance of group lending programmes in comparison to individual lending programmes; it asserts that through their groups, members have a greater ability to enact change due to their co-operation and strength in numbers. The added value of social intermediation provided by the existence of a group is tested through these questions, by determining what (if any) impact the groups have had on the community.

While the benefits of microfinance initiatives to poverty alleviation have been well documented and established, there remains controversy as to the importance of the group lending and group dynamics aspects of many of these programmes. It is our hypothesis that the existence of these groups is essential, particularly to women, in establishing relationships that spur confidence building, information sharing and co-ordinated efforts to create change. This section aims to examine if the “strength in numbers” theory applies to communities in which microfinance initiatives and MFI projects exist. Do groups impact the wider community? Does their presence in the community make a difference or are they simply an ineffective additional cost the community could do without? Do the groups give women more power to enact change in their communities than they otherwise would have had alone? Is this power a result of the numerical strength of the collective group or the sense of confidence the group has developed by working together? This component will deal with the larger picture of impact of microfinance initiatives and groups, their contributions to community-wide change instead of the effects on the individual households.

IV Investigating Ex-clients and Dormant Groups

The failure of some groups to sustain themselves is examined in area four, “**Investigating Ex-clients and Dormant Groups**”. Here we are attempting to discover why turnover exists or groups cease activity; since the hypothesis posits that the formation of social capital through group lending schemes is beneficial to the poor, this section will explore what would prompt members to leave their group and the possible opportunity costs of group membership. It is also possible that members may have “graduated” from their groups and no longer benefit from the social intermediation provided; if this is the case, this section wishes to reveal the level at which this is reached and what possibilities exist for those who exceed these levels.

It has been found that in some cases, microfinance groups will operate for a time and then cease to be active for a variety of reasons. We seek to ascertain why groups grow dormant, why people drop out of MFI groups. Do groups stop functioning because they are ineffective or because group members have “graduated” and no longer need the services provided by the group and the microfinance initiative? When members leave groups do they still maintain contact with their group members, and if they do, are they still benefiting from the social interactions that were created during their time in the group? Do dormant groups wish to restart their groups and do they feel capable of doing so?

V Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

The final theme of the study, “**Outreach to the Poor and Poorest**” attempts to illuminate the degree to which microfinance initiatives reach the poorest members of society and further build upon the opportunity costs to membership that may deter the poorest from participating. The effectiveness of social intermediation in alleviating poverty could also be called into question by a failure to improve the standards of living of the most vulnerable of society; the experiences of other community organisations with outreach are also examined to uncover alternative ways of assisting the poorest.

While microfinance initiatives are generally regarded as successful in improving livelihoods, they also have been criticised for failing to cater to the very poorest of developing countries. The MFI loan structure, delivery mechanisms, and attitudes of staff and other clientele may inadvertently exclude poorer people. For example, meetings and microfinance programme obligations take time away from work schedules and are sometimes held far from the homes of its clients, thus causing them to incur transportation costs and to lose valuable production time. This section aims to determine to what extent microfinance initiatives are able to include the poorest. It will also examine the opportunity costs incurred by participating in a group/microfinance project.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

All studies are limited in their resources and their ability to ensure full coverage of all the issues they touch upon, and this one is no exception. The case study approach, while providing an in depth assessment of the issues it examines, does not allow for a great deal of coverage or generalisations about vast subject areas. It is, however, a qualitative method that permits us to gain some initial knowledge in a few regions of a subject that has been under researched in the past and also to set the stage for future research studies based on our findings. It also enables us to use participatory methodologies and provide useful programme development information for NGOs involved in similar endeavours.

The study also deliberately has a heavier focus on women in MFI programs. While this is expected to yield a number of advantages, it is also recognised that there may be much to learn by exploring the differences and similarities between men's groups and women's groups, or with mixed groups. It is hoped that future researchers will explore such issues.

It would also have been preferable to undertake the study looking at both MFIs using individual lending programs and those using group lending, as another means to ascertain the value added of group-based lending. This too is left for future research.

Another limitation to this study is its lack of control groups. Though ideally the best way to test for impact in development, control groups are also very costly and the resources available have not permitted their use in this study. To compensate for this, the study instead opts to use a triangulation approach, cross-checking information by asking similar questions to individuals, community leaders, MFI staff and focus groups to ensure the accuracy of the information obtained. Where there is a discrepancy of information, the researcher should attempt to determine the cause and seek out a verifiable source if available; this will not only provide the most accurate information but will also yield a reason for the discrepancy, which could potentially shed light on communication, leadership or education issues in the community.

Setting up the field research

I. RESEARCH TOOLS

This **research guide** is designed to familiarise each of the six research teams with the objectives of the study and to outline the research approach. It should not be taken, however, as a strict set of questions and requirements. Your experiences in different countries, with different customs and different people will inevitably require you to adapt these proposed methods to your local contexts. Your skills as a researcher and collaboration as a research team are essential to the success of this study. In order to later compare the various case studies and bring together a coherent analysis of the findings, a continuity of themes and questioning matter is necessary; nevertheless you should feel able to use your personal judgement based on your surroundings and the reactions of those that you are interviewing to stress certain topics, eliminate or modify sensitive questions, or probe important subject areas. Further suggestions and methodology notes can be found in Appendix 1, which should also aid you in your preparations.

A thorough review of the field research will be made during the **research inception workshops**. These will be held in each country with local MFIs and researchers, and led by a member of the core research group.

It is expected that the research teams involved will have experience in both quantitative as well as qualitative/participatory research methods and will work closely with the NGO/MFI to design study detail, timeline, facilitation of research and assistance in choosing those who are interviewed. These issues will be made clearer during the inception workshops.

II. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND QUALITY CONTROL

It is expected that each completed case study will be submitted in the form of an approximately forty (40) page working paper with annexes detailing the research methods (number of people who were interviewed, who participated in the discussion groups, etc.) and the data collected. These working papers should provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the context in which the research took place, analyse each of the five key themes listed above, and analyse the priority issues raised by members of the community.

A synthesis and comparison of the six case studies will be completed by AKFC. This, together with the six case studies, will be edited into a volume suitable for publication. An international advisory group (IAG) has also been established, consisting of Thierry van Bastelaer – World Bank Social Capital Group, Graham Wright – MicroSave-Africa, Nick Adams-Aston – CIDA, Brian Hunter – CIDA, Renée Chao-Beroff – CIDR, and to be confirmed: Friends of Women's World Banking India, Monique Cohen – USAID. The IAG has reviewed the field research guide and will also review the case studies and synthesis. The NGO/MFI will also be involved in reviewing the research obtained and the final paper prior to finalisation.

III. SAMPLE SIZES

It is expected that researchers will visit 7 to 10 communities within each case study, depending on the size of the communities and the size of the overall NGO. Where possible, the general parameters should be decided during the inception workshop. The following table outlines the expected groups to be interviewed, suggested methods, purpose and a calculation of time required. This table uses an example of 7 communities. Appendix 2 provides a table that can be used during the inception workshops (in that

table, the last column is blank, to take into account the number of communities. Other numbers are also left for the MFI and researchers to determine, although a suggested range is given).

It is recommended that the first interviews to be held are those with the MFI staff, both to give the general picture of the MFI itself, and to gain background information on each of the individual communities to be visited during the field research.

During the inception workshop, the MFI and researchers should decide whether each community visit should begin with a session with community leaders. It may be preferable to meet with them first to obtain buy-in or 'permission'; however, there may be cases where this group interview could be done later.

There are a mix of focus groups and individual interviews. Participants for these should be selected with MFI staff in advance. In the case of 'other' community members, it may be preferable to have them suggested by community leaders, other MFI group members, etc. Suggestions for appropriate selection should be discussed during the inception workshop, and then determined as appropriate in each community.

The conduct and timing of the focus groups and individual interviews will be determined by the researchers.

The table below provides an example, outlining research if a total of 7 communities is to be visited.

Who to interview	Method	Purpose	No./hrs per comm'ty	Total overall (7 comm)
Section 1. MFI operational staff	Group interview	Understand communities before beginning field research	1*1 hr Tot: 1 hr	7 hrs
Section 2. Community leaders	Group interview, up to 5 people	Understand social capital in community and impact of MFI	1* 1-2 hrs Tot: 1-2 hrs	7-14 hrs
Section 3. a. Community members b. MFI group mbs	Groups of 3-5, PRA * wealth ranking * social capital	Understand social classifications and existing institutional structure and its reach	1*2-3 hrs Tot: 2-3 hrs 1*2-3 hrs Tot: 2-3 hrs	14-21 hrs 14-21 hrs
Section 4. MFI group mbs	Individual interviews	Explore 5 key themes	10*1 hr Tot: 10 hrs	70 hrs
Section 5. Ex-clients	Individual interviews	Explore 5 key themes from different perspective	3-5* 1 hr Tot: 3-5 hrs	21-35 hrs
Section 6. Dormant group (if applicable)	Group interview	Understand why dormancy occurs.	(1* 2hrs) (Tot: 2 hrs)	(2 hrs)
Section 7. Non MFI members	Group interview	Explore 5 key themes from different perspective	1-2* 2 hr Tot: 2-4 hrs	14-28 hrs
Travel between communities (estimate)			½ day	4 days
ESTIMATED TOTAL (in hours and person days (p.d.))			25-34 hrs 3-4.25 p.d.	175-238 hrs 22-30 p.d.

This example sets out the quantity of communities and interviews for the study (the actual communities that will take part should be chosen once further information on the MFI is gathered, below). The next table helps to calculate the total time for the field research and report writing after the initial 2-day inception workshop where the MFI representatives and local researchers will be present.

Tasks	Time per community	Total time (person days)
Establish study communities with MFI, and collect information on MFI background		1 pd
Interviews and focus groups with communities – this should be taken from the calculations made in the table above.	3 pd	22-30 pd
Write-up of field notes	2 pd	14 pd
Analysis and write-up of community data	4 pd	28 pd
Overall writing of report		14 pd
Revision and incorporation of reviewers' comments (as necessary)		3 pd.
TOTAL		83-90 p.d.

IV. SELECTING COMMUNITIES FOR FIELD RESEARCH

The researchers will work with the MFI to select the communities in which there will be detailed field research. Check with your main MFI contact as to whether this stage should be undertaken with staff, with staff and management, or with management.

The selection of communities is not intended to be representative, as the sample will be too small. The selection process should be done in a way that allows the research team to see different types of communities, but is still feasible from a transport/logistics point of view.

The exact number of communities will have been chosen already, using the table presented above. This should have been based on both the practicalities of transport and the feasible research time to fit within the overall study parameters.

In terms of selection of the actual communities, geographic proximity is obviously a key issue. Presented below are two options for selection of communities, which could be used separately or together. Make note of how the communities are chosen, and be sure that analysis of each community – and more importantly, comparison of communities – takes into account its 'ranking'. The examples below use 7 communities as the total; modify as necessary.

Whichever option is chosen, it is also important to try to choose a mix of groups that are 'old' (define this according to the length of time the MFI has been established), 'middle', or 'young'.

OPTION 1. Performance ranking.

- i. Begin by asking the MFI to identify an area where performance (in terms of repayment and group activity) has generally been good. Within this area, choose 2 groups that have 'underperformed' relative to their neighbours.
Total: 2 'worst of the best' groups

- ii. Next consider areas that have generally had poor performance, and choose 2 groups that have performed better than the average.
Total: 2 'best of the worst' groups
- iii. Choose 3 'average' groups, for a total of 7.

OPTION 2. 'Wealth' ranking.

Working with MFI staff, consider which communities would fall into a 'worst off', 'middle' or 'relatively better off' category, when measured in terms of overall income or social indicators. Choose 2 of the worst off and two off the better off, and three of the middle ranking communities.

Among the groups that are chosen for interviews, you may also consider whether to include a group that is more 'disadvantaged' i.e. contains more members who might be widows, female-headed households, etc. It may be interesting to consider social intermediation and social capital issues from such a sub-group.

Once the groups are chosen, work out a field schedule with the MFI to visit each of the communities where the groups are located. Ensure that there will be sufficient time to complete the field research in each community, including recording and preliminary analysis time, and time to travel between communities.

The table above has suggested interviewing a dormant group 'where applicable'. Find out first whether the MFI has any dormant groups. If so, are there many dormant groups relative to active groups? If the dormant groups are a relatively small percentage of the total, then in consultation with the MFI decide on one dormant group to interview (trying to get together as many of the members as possible for a group interview). If at all possible, interview a dormant group in a community that also has active groups. If the MFI has a considerable number of dormant groups, then you might decide to interview two dormant groups (depending on whether this is feasible logistically).

V. INTERVIEWING GUIDES

The next sections of this field manual provide interviewing guidelines for the various stakeholders included in the interviews. **It is essential that these are carefully reviewed by the local research teams, translated into local languages and/or incorporate local concepts and typical sayings, before proceeding to field testing. Field testing is the next essential step toward ensuring that each of the different instruments is appropriately modified in light of the local socio-cultural context.**

During the interviews, keep in mind that some of the 'probe' questions are there to help determine whether change can be attributed to the MFI or to broader factors. When broader changes are occurring, it is also important to try to determine whether changes begin within the group (i.e. with its members) and then move out into the wider community, or whether some changes might remain within the group itself without being 'adopted' by others.

Each of the interview sections can be pulled out and used separately for that particular group. The questions are organised according to the five key themes, so that the information received from different stakeholders on one theme can then be pulled together and analysed.

Section 1. Interviews with MFI Operational Staff

Objective: Find out factual information on the MFI that will allow researchers to conduct interviews in the community with this basic knowledge in hand, and assist them in considering attribution of impacts to the MFI program.

Who to interview: This section is divided into two parts. Part One involves more factual information, for which MFI management or operational staff should be interviewed. For Part Two, the pre-community interviews, MFI operational staff who work in that community should be interviewed as a group (where there is only one, interview this one person).

Number of interviews: Part One: one interview, approx. 1-2 hrs. Part Two: One pre-community interview per community, of approx. 1-2 hours.

Tips to researchers:

- Generally, avoid interviewing management and staff together. This is especially important in the pre-community interviews.
- Be aware that MFI staff may try to present the program in the best light possible, and hence their answers may contain biases. Reassure them that the purpose is not to evaluate the program and that responses will be kept confidential. Ask for other 'background information', particularly any monitoring or evaluation studies, which can help in the interpretation of their responses.
- See also Appendix 1 for individual interview guidelines.

PART ONE

BASIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The researchers should begin by finding out factual information on the MFI. This can be done by reviewing background documents and by consulting with staff. Include the following areas:

Basic Information, including:

- ◆ When was the MFI established?
- ◆ What was its mission statement, and has this mandate changed or remained the same?
- ◆ What is (are) the target client group(s)? What sorts of general requirements exist for belonging to groups? I.e. Socio-economic status, education, financial resources, land ownership.
- ◆ What credit and savings products are offered by the MFI and when were they introduced?
- ◆ What is the interest rate policy?

- ◆ What products or services other than savings and loans (e.g. insurance, social services...) are offered?
- ◆ How many communities does the MFI work in, and how many clients does the MFI have?
- ◆ Discuss with the MFI its policy toward operational or financial sustainability and obtain basic data that can help ascertain this. Include things like average loan size, repayment rates by types of loans, late payment or default rates (include how these are calculated) and other basic loan data that is part of the management information system.

Group-based lending, including:

- ◆ Find out about the type(s) of group lending that the MFI has.
- ◆ Who are in the groups – just men, just women, mixed groups?
- ◆ What obligations or responsibilities do group members have to fulfil?

- ◆ Find out details about the group lending with women including:
 - ◆ What is the average group size?
 - ◆ How long has the ‘oldest’ group been together? The ‘youngest’ group?
 - ◆ Key successes?
 - ◆ Key challenges or lessons learned?
- ◆ What non-financial activities (e.g. awareness training, business advice, etc.) does the MFI have with groups? Make a note of these, and also note if there are any costs for the services.
- ◆ What are the key roles of MFI staff who work with the groups? Detail.

- ◆ What do you think are some of the factors contributing to good performance of groups? Bad performance?
- ◆ Do members generally belong to groups for a long time or is there turnover? Is any data kept on this? Does the MFI attach any importance to group stability?
- ◆ If a former group member wanted to rejoin a group, what would be required?

- ◆ Does the MFI have groups that are considered dormant or inactive? (Write down the criteria for dormancy or inactivity). How many, and what percent of the total number of groups does this represent? (if none are dormant, skip the next questions)
 - ◆ Probe: Why are groups dormant? try to ascertain reasons for dormancy and whether there are patterns or commonalities, e.g. problems in making payments, length of time in group, different ethnic groups, etc.
 - ◆ If there is more than one MFI group in the community, have any of the members from dormant MFI groups been absorbed by other MFI groups?
 - ◆ Do any of the members from dormant groups belong to other groups in the community?

To the researchers: Try to find out about the general context in which the MFI operates, specifically the existence and nature of social capital before the MFI began operation. Also, consider the extent to which the MFI works with these. E.g.:

- ◆ Before the MFI began operating in this area, what other types of groups or associations existed?
- ◆ Are the MFI groups newly-created, or are they built on any previously existing groups or informal associations?

- ◆ Does the MFI have networks with other types of economic organisations or associations? Probe: public and/or private?
 - ◆ If yes, how does this benefit clients?
- ◆ Does the MFI have networks with other social sector organisations? Probe: public and/or private?
 - ◆ If yes, how does this benefit clients?
- ◆ Before the MFI began operating in this area, what other types of informal lenders and savings mobilisers existed?
- ◆ Does the MFI have networks with other informal lenders and savings mobilisers?
 - ◆ If yes, how does this benefit clients?
- ◆ What effect has the MFI had on existing social networks?
 - ◆ Probe for both financial (e.g. informal moneylenders or savings groups) and social networks.
 - ◆ Does the MFI have any specific policies about influencing or interfering with existing social networks?

PART TWO.

GETTING A PICTURE OF EACH OF THE COMMUNITIES IN THE STUDY

Before visiting each of the communities chosen, begin by interviewing in a group the MFI operational staff who work in that area (e.g. loan officers, animators, etc. – note who they are). Again, it is preferable not to meet with staff and management together. Mention that you have already become familiar with the general framework of the MFI's operations, and that these questions are meant to understand each of the communities to be visited in greater depth.

The purpose of the questions below is to better understand the similarities and differences of each of the communities. This should set the influence and impact of MFI activities within the local context, and also help to determine where change should or should not be attributed to the MFI.

NAME OF COMMUNITY: _____

NAME (OR LEADER) OF GROUP: _____

PERFORMANCE RATING OR WEALTH RANKING OF GROUP: _____

AGE OF GROUP: _____

SIZE OF GROUP: _____

GENERAL CONTEXT

1. What is the size of the community? (in terms of population and households)
2. What is the distance of the community from the nearest road? Nearest town?
3. Is there a local market within the community?
 *If no, what is the distance to the nearest market?
4. What are the key economic activities of men and women in the community?
5. What is the enrolment of children in school relative to the national average? (approximate)
6. What is the health status of the community/community relative to the national average? (approximate)
7. What type of financial services – formal and informal – are available in (or near to) the community?
8. What organisations, formal and informal, other than the MFI groups exist in the community?
9. How many MFI groups have been formed in the community altogether?

Theme I Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction

1. Since the formation of groups, have you observed any changes in relations between members of the community?
 *If yes, describe. Probe for positive and negative.
2. Since the formation of groups, have you observed any changes in women's activities outside the home?
 *If yes, describe. Probe for positive and negative.
3. When women do spend time outside the home, is it primarily for market activities and household chores, or is it for social and recreational activities?

Theme II Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skill Building

Note to questioner: this section aims to determine if changes have occurred in gender equality and attitudes towards gender roles since the formation of MFI groups and if the MFI groups have contributed to these changes. Please probe answers for detail with this objective in mind.

1. Since the formation of groups, have you observed any changes in male-female relations or spousal relations among members of the community?
 - *If yes, describe.
 - *Probe on spousal relations, if appropriate.
2. In the community, are changes occurring in the types of things that are becoming more typical for women to do, for example, women spending time outside the home, or that women and men are now “allowed” to do?
 - * To what do you think these changes are attributable?
 - * Probe: what has the influence of the MFI groups been, if any?
3. How much do women participate in institutions in the community? Probe: school committees, water committees, local government committees, etc.
4. Do MFI members undertake leadership roles in other groups, organisations or institutions? Detail.
IF YES,
 - ◆ Probe: is this more or less than other non-MFI members?
 - ◆ Probe: Did they do so prior to joining the MFI?
 - ◆ Probe: Are other (non-MFI member) women in the community more likely to undertake leadership roles because of the example of MFI women?
5. Do you feel that the skills women have built through the groups have had an impact on the success or failure of the microfinance initiatives?
 - *If yes, in what way? Describe.

Theme III Leveraging Power of Groups

1. Have you observed any striking changes in customs or social conditions in the community over the past X years? (X being # of years since formation of MFI groups)
 - * Probe: has the MFI had any influence on this? In what way?

If the open-ended question above has elicited little response, then probe with the following questions:

2. Have MFI groups identified and tried to change any deficiencies in social service provision in the community? E.g. in areas such as health care, effectiveness of basic education, effectiveness of water provision, etc?
 - *Probe: What was attempted? What was accomplished?
3. If changes have occurred, have they impacted the community more widely?
4. Have MFI groups tried to work together to bring about change or do they work independently of one another? Do they work with other groups or organisations in the community?

Theme IV Investigating Ex-clients

Begin by recording whether there are any dormant groups in the community. Then focus on ex-clients.

1. How many group members under your MFI have dropped out of their groups? (work out the number as a % of total MFI group members)
2. Why do members generally drop out of groups?
 * Probe for patterns: e.g. can't make payments, "graduated", not benefiting from group, length of time in group, etc.
3. Are former group members typically absorbed by other groups?
4. Do former group members generally belong to other groups in the community?

Theme V Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

1. In this community, which segments of the population does your MFI primarily reach?
2. Do other organisations/groups in this community reach the same target group?
 Probe: are there some that reach the very poorest?
 If so, what types of programmes do they run and how are they able to do this?
3. How are the organisations/groups that reach the very poorest funded? Does this funding differ from that of other groups/organisations? From your funding?
4. Are there some groups or individuals who are excluded from active participation in community decision making?
 *If yes, who and why?
5. Are there some groups or individuals who are left out of society?
 *If yes, who and why?

Section 2. Group Interview with Community Leaders/ Representatives

Objective: To get ‘permission’ to undertake the research in the community, and to understand how community leaders perceive the role of the MFI and the role of other community groups, organisations or associations.

Who to interview: With assistance from the MFI, select community leaders or representatives to be interviewed in a group. Consider gender balance in the selection of participants.

Number of interviews: One group interview, with up to five participants, in a group interview of 1-2 hours.

Tips to researchers:

- Do not have MFI staff or management present at this group interview.
- Create a ‘neutral’ atmosphere, i.e. assuring the community leaders that you are not an evaluator looking for positive or negative view of the MFI, but are seeking to understand how the MFI works within the wider community context.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the key economic activities of men and women in the community?
2. What organisations, formal and informal, other than the MFI groups exist in the community?
3. What are the most pressing problems or concerns of the community?
4. Who are most affected by these problems? In what way?

Theme II Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skill Building

5. Since the MFI began operating in this community, have you observed any changes in those people who are group members?
 - If yes, probe for what changes are.
6. Since the MFI began operating in this community, have you observed any changes in the community more generally?
 - If yes, probe for what changes are.
7. Considering the MFI groups, in your opinion what is their most important contribution to the community?

Note to researcher: the next question aims to determine if changes have occurred in gender equality and attitudes towards gender roles since the formation of MFI groups and if the MFI groups have contributed to these changes. Please probe answers for detail with the issue of attribution in mind.

8. In your community, are changes occurring in the types of things that are becoming more typical for women to do, for example, women spending time outside the home, or that women and men are now “allowed” to do?

Probe: In what way?

*Are attitudes towards male and female activities changing for both men and women?

* To what do you think these changes are attributable?

* Do you feel that the MFI groups have contributed to this? In what way?

*If yes, what are your feeling about these changes?

Probe: Have you observed any changes in spousal relations among members of your community since the formation of groups?

Note: for the following two questions, adapt them to reflect the issues relevant to the region and culture you are researching. These are only examples, please elaborate into other social areas like health, family, education where appropriate

9. Do you think the MFI groups try to change social customs in the community, e.g. are marriage practices, like the age of marriage or the giving of dowry or multiple wives, changing in your community?
10. Another example is education for girls – are attitudes toward this changing?
11. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions of ways to improve the MFI programmes in your community?

Theme III Leveraging Power of Groups

12. Have MFI groups identified and tried to change any deficiencies in social service provision in the community? E.g. in areas such as health care, effectiveness of basic education, effectiveness of water provision, etc?.

*Probe: What was attempted? What was accomplished?

13. If changes have occurred, have they impacted the community more widely?

14. Have MFI groups tried to work together to bring about change or do they work independently of one another? Do they work with other groups or organisations in the community? Which ones?

Theme V Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

15. After joining a MFI group, do people tend to join more groups or withdraw from others? Which ones? Why?

16. Are there members of the community that were once in a MFI group but have since dropped out?

*If yes, why did they leave their groups?

17. Are there members of the community that cannot be a part of a MFI group?

*If yes, why?

18. Who do you consider are the poorest in your community? Probe and note their key characteristics.

19. Does the MFI, in your opinion, tend to attract the very poorest of the community?

*If yes, how do they do that?

*If no, why not?

OUTREACH OF OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Note to questioner: this sub-section is trying to place the effectiveness of MFIs within the larger scope of community groups and organisations.

20. Do other associations, organisations or groups in your community primarily reach the poorest people?

21. For those organisations/groups that reach the very poorest, what types of programmes do they run and how are they able to do this?

22. Which organisations reach the poorest women?

23. Are men and women generally targeted/reached by the same groups?

24. How are the organisations/groups that reach the very poorest funded? Does this funding differ from that of other groups/organisations?

25. Are there some groups or individuals who are excluded from active participation in community decision making?

*If yes, who and why?

Section 3. Guidelines for Focus Groups

Objective: to better understand who the MFI is reaching, and how it fits into the other ‘social capital’ in the community.

Who to interview: One session with a selection of 3-5 community representatives (the meeting with community leaders may help in their selection). Consider gender balance in the selection of participants. One session with a selection of 3-5 current members of MFI group(s) in the community.

Number of interviews: Total of two focus group sessions, 2-3 hours each.

Tips to researchers:

- Be sure to note who is present in the sessions, and understand the possible biases that their comments may have depending on their position in the community.
- Review Appendix 1 notes on focus group interviews.

The purpose of these sessions is to understand the outreach of different groups or organisations in the community. It therefore begins by understanding the different well-being categories of people in the community, and then examines what types of organisations reach out to these different categories of people, particularly the poor.

This PRA/Focus Group session will begin with a wealth ranking exercise, having the participants think about who is ‘better-off’ and ‘less well off’ in the community, by defining their own criteria. Then, the FG will consider the types of organisations or associations that these different groups belong to, with questions to probe the added value of the MFI within this broader institutional landscape. Value-added will be explored along the five themes, including individual empowerment, the leveraging power of groups, and outreach to the poor.

Step 1. WEALTH RANKING

Undertake a wealth ranking exercise with the FG participants. The following is a detailed guideline for wealth ranking, which was used for World Development Report 2000/01 studies on the Impact of Microfinance on Poverty Alleviation.¹

What is wealth ranking?

Wealth ranking is a way of finding out about wealth and poverty in a village or other small community.

¹ Grateful acknowledgement to Graham Wright and Monique Cohen for providing background documents on the WDR consultations.

What does wealth ranking give us?

It gives us two main things:

1. An understanding of *in what way* and *why* the rich are rich and the poor are poor, as seen by the members of the village
2. A 'ranking' of the households in the village, from the richest to the poorest, as seen by the members of the village

How does it differ from other ways of investigating wealth and poverty?

It uses the *values* and *opinions* and *knowledge* of the villagers themselves: our own values and opinions and prejudices are not involved at all

How is wealth ranking done?

1. Obtain an unambiguous and complete list of the names of the households in the community you are investigating (around 20 households in number)
2. Write each name clearly on one small card: shuffle them to obliterate any 'order' in the names when they were given to you
3. Choose your first 'respondent': it doesn't matter if it is a man or a woman, or rich or poor, or old or young, but the respondent should be a permanent resident, and know all the households, and have an hour of time to give you
4. Choose a place to do the ranking: inside away from the wind and rain with a flat space to lay out the cards is best
5. Make your respondent feel comfortable and at ease with you: check that she believes that in her village some households are poorer than others
6. Remove the respondent's card from the pile of cards for the time being
7. Choose two cards at random and ask the respondent 'which of these two is poorer than the other?' (if your respondent is illiterate you will constantly have to repeat the names)
8. If she says 'both are the same', probe a bit more: if she insists, place the two cards together side by side...
9. ...but if she says 'X is poorer than Y' then put X beneath Y
10. Ask, *in what way* is X poorer than Y? and note the answer on X's card (the answers to this question will tell you the respondent's understanding of the *dimensions* of poverty)
11. Ask, *why* is X poorer than Y? and note the answer in your notebook (the answers to this question will tell you the respondent's understanding of the *causes* of poverty)
12. Never never never *prompt* the respondent: do **not** say 'for example, do they have more heifer...?' or 'for example, did they inherit the land...?' We want the respondent's opinion, not our own
13. Now produce the next card. Ask how it compares to X, then to Y. Place it above other cards of households poorer than it, and beneath households richer than it: again, note 'in what way' and 'why' the household is richer or poorer
14. Continue until all the cards (ending with the respondent's own card) are done
15. Make a final check of the order of the cards with the respondent: she may want to change her mind: if she is illiterate, read them all out to her
16. Mark the cards, starting with '1' (or '1=') for the richest (note: if there are two households that are equal first, the next will be numbered 3rd, and so on)
17. Ask her to identify on the cards which households she has a reciprocal interest-free lending relationship with: mark the cards with 'b' for the ones she borrows from, 'l' for the ones she lends to, 'bl' if she does both
18. Thank her. Ask her if she has any questions. Answer them honestly.
19. Choose your second respondent. Choose a man if the first respondent was a woman, rich if the first was poor, old if the first was young, and so on
20. Make fresh cards and repeat steps 4 to 18 inclusive with the second respondent

21. Choose a third respondent and repeat steps 4 to 18 inclusive
22. Back in your office, compare the three results - if they are broadly similar you've probably done well, if they are violently different then there's been some mistake
23. Add up the total score for each household: for example a very rich household may have been ranked 1st by one respondent, 3rd by the second respondent and 3rd = by the third respondent: that household's combined score will be seven (1 + 3 + 3)
24. List the households with the one(s) with the smallest score (the richest) at the top and the one(s) with the highest score (the poorest) at the bottom

Alternatively, the researchers may decide not to do a complete listing of each household, but to undertake a more simplified exercise. Use core questions such as: What characteristics distinguish a less-well off household from a better-off household? Make sure that the probe questions such as ability to meet basic needs, assets, differences between men and women, etc. are used.

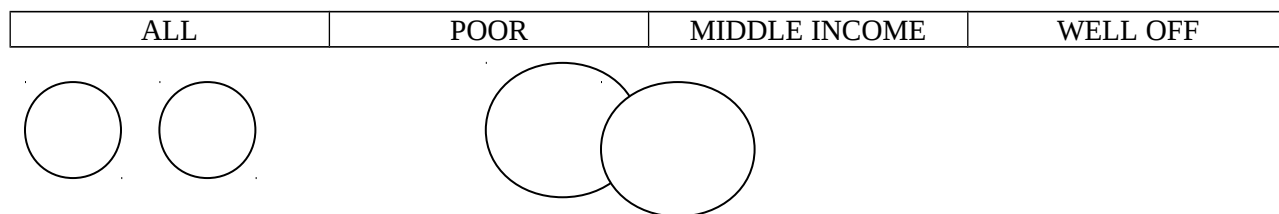
Using these characteristics, create and define the economic categories that households in this community fall into. Then ask the FG participants what proportion of the households belong to each category?

Step 2. SOCIAL CAPITAL DIAGRAM

Explain to participants that we are interested in understanding how different categories of people – such as the categories just created – belong to or have access to different types of groups, networks or links. These may be formal groups, or they may also be informal relationships, such as with moneylenders. The FG is asked to begin by listing the different types of social capital in their community, and the researcher will note whether these are mainly economic, social, recreational, religious, etc., and then who is served by that social capital. Keep track of organisations that may have existed but have now disappeared or become weaker.

List the different types of groups, networks or links in your community. List each of these on a round card (with purpose written below the name).

Link each of the cards with the socioeconomic categories from the first exercise. One way to do this is to put the categories across the top, then place the groups under the appropriate one. A category for 'all' (i.e. organisations that reach all community members) might need to be created. An example is given below – but note that the headers will need to be replaced by those determined by FG participants.



Note: if participants are mainly illiterate, then pictorial representations of the other groups may need to be used. This may limit the FG to just listing the major ones.

The researchers should try, wherever possible, to understand some dynamics of the organisational landscape. Probe for relationships between organisations, and changes over time.

If possible, do two diagrams. One should place organisations at this point in time. The other should place the organisations existing before the MFI started. If there are differences, ask why. Try to get a sense of whether the MFI has built on existing structures, has substituted for existing structures, and the types of relationships with other organisations over time.

While undertaking this exercise, and in writing up notes from the FGs:

The researchers should keep aware of the five key themes of the study:

- vi. Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction
- vii. Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skills Building
- viii. Leveraging Power of Groups
- ix. Investigating Ex-clients and Dormant Groups
- x. Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

The following are areas that might be probed during the FG sessions:

Theme 1: Trust, sharing.

- During the MFI member FG, probe what is the value to members of belonging to an MFI group.
- E.g. What is of more value to the group members, the loan or the group? Could either one stand on its own or are they interdependent?
- E.g. probe for personal relationships between group members (ie. how they interact, what they have in common, how they resolve disagreements) and how these relationships differ from those they have with other members of their community.

Theme 2. Empowerment.

- Have the presence of groups in the community affected gender roles or attitudes towards women in any way? If so, how?.
- What skills have group members developed through their involvement with groups

Theme 3. Leveraging.

- Have any of these groups tried to enact social change? In what? Has there been any success? Have they achieved this alone or working with other groups?

Theme 5. Outreach.

- What are the obligations of belonging to a group? What are the positive and negative impacts of membership on the household? How are negative impacts compensated for?
- Do community organisations reach the poorest of society? Which ones? How are they able to do this/Why are they unable to do this?
- Are certain groups in society excluded from decision making? Who and why?

Section 4. Individual questionnaires for current members of MFI groups

Objective: To explore in-depth the five key themes of the study, by allowing individuals to express their views in a confidential manner.

Who to interview: Members of MFI groups, most likely those who have not been selected for participation in focus groups (although some, if they are willing, may be interviewed individually as well).

Number of interviews: Up to 10 individual interviews per community.

Tips to researchers:

- ◆ Do not have an MFI representative present. Begin by explaining that you are not from the MFI, and reiterate this point if an as necessary.
- ◆ Discuss briefly the objectives of the study, and you may wish to mention that this is part of a larger four-country study.
- ◆ If the MFI group has a name, use that throughout the questions below. If a different terminology is used to refer to the group – e.g. lending group, peer group, etc. – substitute that term for ‘MFI group’.
- ◆ You may wish to consider interviewing some people who are considered more disadvantaged, e.g. widows, female-headed households.
- ◆ During the pre-testing of the questionnaire, you will likely need to prioritize questions and shorten the questionnaire.
- ◆ See Appendix 1 for more details on individual interviews.

1. How old is your MFI group <name>?
2. How many loans have you taken since joining your MFI group?

Theme I Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction

1. How long have you belonged to this group?
2. Who established your MFI group? Probe: How was it formed? Who selected the members of the group?
3. Did you know the other members of your group prior to the establishment of the group? All or some? How well?

4. What are the things you have in common with the other members of your MFI group? Are your MFI group members quite diverse or are people fairly similar?
5. How would you describe your relationship with the other members of your group?
Probe: Do you find the other members of your group helpful?
*If no, do you think they are usually just looking out for themselves?
6. Do you think that anyone in your MFI group would take advantage of you if given the opportunity?
7. Do you think that other groups work much the same way?
8. Has there ever been a serious dispute within the group?
IF YES,
* how was it resolved?
* has the way you resolve disputes changed since joining your MFI group? In what way?
9. How do you resolve disputes with non-MFI group members?
10. Do you feel your involvement in the community has changed since joining the group?
*If yes, how and why??
11. If you were having difficulties making your weekly loan payments, who would you turn to first for assistance?
*Probe: If other than the MFI group, would you consider asking the members of your MFI group?
* Probe: If no, why not? How do you think members of your MFI group would react to a request for assistance?
12. How would you react if another member of your group asked you for help?
13. Have you suffered any major family crises, for example due to loss of livestock, illness in the family, accidents, etc?
IF YES,
* were you able to manage it with your own resources or did you require outside resources?
Probe: what types of access to credit would you have?
Probe: were you able to rely on other members of the MFI group? Were you able to rely on other members of other groups you belong to?
Probe: do you have insurance?
*If yes, were you able to use insurance to deal with this crisis?
14. Do men and women deal with crises in the same or different ways? I.e. are generally handled together by husband and wife or separately?
15. Since you joined your MFI group, do you now rely more or less on your friends and family?
16. Since the MFI groups have been formed, are families now more or less able to weather crises than before? Is this mainly because of the financial assistance of the MFI itself, or mainly because of the responses of group members?
17. Do you frequently associate with people outside your household?
18. Since you joined your MFI group, do you spend more or less time associating with other people outside your home?
19. Do you spend time primarily with other members of your MFI group or others in the community?
Probe: if others, who are they?

- Probe: Do you meet in groups or individually?
20. When you visit with people, is this for social or recreational activities or for market activities, chores or shopping?
*If both, which most often?
21. What is the most important aspect to you of meeting with other people? Why?
22. What happens at your group meetings? Probe: Do you discuss things other than your individual businesses and loan repayment schedules? *If yes, what do you discuss?
23. When you meet with your MFI group, do group members tend to share information about economic issues or events going on in or near the community?
Researcher: If necessary give an example such as, do you receive information about products that are being sold in nearby towns?
Probe, if yes: Do you know more information now than before you joined the MFI group?
24. When you meet with your MFI group do group members tend to share information about social services or social issues going on in or near the community?
Researcher: If necessary give an example such as, do you hear about doctor visits or vaccination teams?
Probe, if yes: Do you know more information now than before you joined the MFI group?
25. Is this sort of information valuable to you and the wellbeing of your family?
26. What subjects of information sharing is/would be most useful to you? Why?
27. Are there any subjects you would not wish to share with your group? What/Why?
28. If there was one thing you could change about the group meetings, what would it be?
29. To you, what are the two most important things about being in the MFI group?
30. To you, what are the two most problematic or difficult things about being in the MFI group?

Theme II Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skill Building

31. Did you have access to credit prior to joining your MFI group ?
IF YES,
Probe: was this through informal sources – e.g. family or moneylenders – and/or through a ‘formal’ lending program or institution?

Probe: if a program, was that programme one of group lending or individual lending?
*If individual lending, why did you choose to join a group lending project? Do you prefer group or individual lending? Why?
32. Do you currently belong to any other formal or informal lending or savings groups?
33. Have all the members of your MFI group always made their loan payments on time?
*If no, What were the consequences for your group?
34. If you had the choice for your next loan, would you prefer to take a group loan or an individual loan? Why?
35. If you were to take an individual loan, would you still maintain contact with your group? Why/Why not?

36. We want to understand more about women's and men's roles in your community. Have you observed any changes occurring in the types of things that are becoming more typical for men and women to do? (Researcher: give example if necessary, e.g., women spending time outside the home)

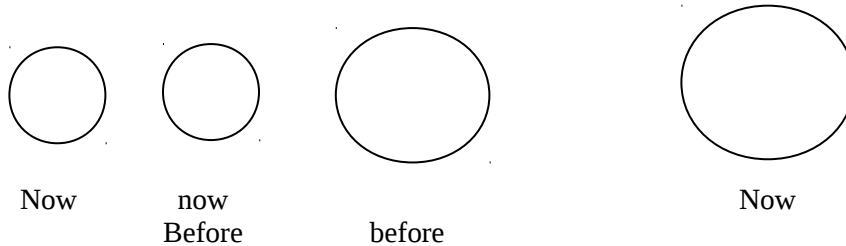
IF YES,

Probe for what these changes are

Probe for the causes of the changes

Probe if the MFI groups have been a cause, but ask the respondent to be as specific as possible (i.e. so that attribution is clear)

37. Researcher: with the respondent, discuss the other groups or associations that they belong to (i.e. other than this MFI group). Start by talking about the groups they belong to now, then ask about those they belonged to before joining the MFI. Probe any changes in the number of types of groups that they belong to since joining the MFI group. You may wish to work with the interviewee by drawing, on a sheet of paper, each of the organisations that they belong to (or cutting up pieces of paper and arranging them). You might want the size of the circle to indicate the importance of the group.



Discuss the different patterns that are appearing. If the interviewee belonged to a group before but not now, why is that, and do the demands of membership from the MFI play any role? It is particularly important to probe whether membership in the MFI has built on earlier groups that the interviewee belonged to, whether belonging to the MFI has substituted for earlier membership or association, how membership in different organisations is complementary or not.

The following questions can also guide the probing:

- * are these groups mainly women's groups or mixed groups?
- * what are the similarities between your MFI groups and the other groups you belong to?
- * what are the differences between your MFI groups and the other groups you belong to?
- * what contributions do you make to those groups? Probe: time, resources, participation in decision making?
- why do you belong to both?
- Why do you no longer belong to other groups now that you are a member of the MFI group?

38. Do any of the other members of your MFI group belong to other groups?

III Leveraging Power of Groups

The following questions try to understand the role of the MFI group in catalyzing people's desire to make changes in their situation or community, and how they (and/or the group) have acted on these desires.

Try also to probe whether the group tried to voice its concerns to local community leaders or to bring about change in the community.

For the following three questions, adapt them to reflect the issues relevant to the region and culture you are researching. The first question should relate to customs or norms; the second to access to or use of social services, and the third to decision-making in the household. We have listed some examples below, but these should be adapted as appropriate.

39. In your MFI group, do you discuss traditional customs or practices like (e.g. age of marriage, the giving of dowry or multiple wives)?

IF YES,

Probe: Are there changes that you would like to bring about?

Did you think about these changes before you joined the MFI group?

Did the MFI staff prompt you to think about these changes?

Have you tried to make any changes in this situation? What was the result – probe: at the individual, family, and community levels?

Did your MFI group achieve this alone or did you work with other groups within the community?

40. In your MFI group, do you discuss the availability and use of social services..... (e.g. education, particularly for girls, or health care, or effectiveness of water provision, etc.)

* IF YES,

Probe: Are there changes that you would like to bring about?

Did you think about these changes before you joined the MFI group?

Did the MFI staff prompt you to think about these changes?

Have you tried to make any changes in this situation? What was the result – probe: at the individual, family, and community levels?

Did your MFI group achieve this alone or did you work with other groups within the community?

41. In your MFI group, do you discuss roles and decision-making of women and men in the household?

* IF YES,

Probe: Are there changes that you would like to bring about?

Did you think about these changes before you joined the MFI group?

Did the MFI staff prompt you to think about these changes?

Have you tried to make any changes in this situation? What was the result – probe: at the individual, family, and community levels?

Are there any changes in your relationship with your husband? How has that change affected you and your family?

42. IF THE RESPONDENT MENTIONED CHANGES IN ANY OF THE THREE AREAS ABOVE:
What about the group gave you the ability to achieve change?

43. What is the most important contribution of your group to the community?

Theme IV Investigating Ex-clients

44. Have any members of your MFI group left the group?

IF YES,

Probe: Why did they leave?

Do they belong to another MFI group now, or another type of borrowing group?

What was the effect on the group when they left?
Would you accept them back into the group?

Theme V Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

45. Before you joined the MFI, were there any requirements to join?
46. Now, what obligations or responsibilities do you have to fulfil as a member of your MFI group?
47. Do these obligations affect other responsibilities or other facets of your life? (If necessary probe, for example, due to your weekly meetings, do you have to take time away from other activities?)

48. Are there members of your community that cannot be a part of an MFI group?
*If yes, why?

26. Who do you consider are the poorest in your community? Probe and note their key characteristics.
27. Does the MFI, in your opinion, tend to attract the very poorest of the community?
*If yes, how do they do that?
*If no, why not?

OUTREACH OF OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Note to questioner: this sub-section is trying to place the effectiveness of MFIs within the larger scope of community groups and organisations.

28. Do other associations, organisations or groups in your community primarily reach the poorest people?
29. For those organisations/groups that reach the very poorest, what types of programmes do they run and how are they able to do this?
30. Which organisations reach the poorest women?
31. Are men and women generally targeted/reached by the same groups?

32. Are there some groups or individuals who are excluded from active participation in community decision making?
*If yes, who and why?

Section 5. Individual questionnaires for former members of MFI groups – Ex-clients

Objective: To explore in-depth the five key themes of the study from the perspective of those who are no longer in MFI groups, by allowing individuals to express their views in a confidential manner.

Who to interview: Ex-clients from MFI groups, chosen based on MFI records. Ex-clients are preferred for interview, but depending on the MFI, these may also be people who are not formally ‘ex-clients’, but for example, may be people who have chosen not to take a second (or subsequent) loan.

Number of interviews: Three to five individual interviews per community, one hour per interview.

Tips to researchers:

- ◆ Do not have an MFI representative present. Begin by explaining that you are not from the MFI, and reiterate this point if and as necessary.
- ◆ Discuss briefly the objectives of the study, and you may wish to mention that this is part of a larger four-country study.
- ◆ If the MFI group has a name, use that throughout the questions below. If a different terminology is used to refer to the group – e.g. lending group, peer group, etc. – substitute that term for ‘MFI group’.
- ◆ During the pre-testing of the questionnaire, prioritize and adapt questions as necessary.
- ◆ See Appendix 1 for more details on individual interviews.

1. How long were you a member of your MFI group?
2. How many loans did you take while in your MFI group?
3. Did the MFI group already exist when you joined, or were you an ‘original’ member? Who selected the members of the group?
4. Did you know the other members of your group prior to the establishment of the group? All or some? How well?
5. What are the things you had in common with the other members of your MFI group?
6. Why are you no longer a member of your MFI group? (Probe, can’t make payments, “graduated”, not benefiting from group, didn’t get along with group members....)

7. What are the two most important benefits you got from being in the group?
 - Probe: Do you still have these benefits? Probe: why or why not?
 - If no benefits: why do you think there were no benefits? Why do the others stay in the group?
8. What were the two biggest costs to being in the group?
9. How would you describe your relationship with the other members of your group?
10. Did you think that anyone in your MFI group would take advantage of you if given the opportunity?
11. Did you think that other MFI groups work much the same way?
12. Was there ever been a serious dispute within the MFI group?
 - IF YES,
 - * how was it resolved?
13. Do you still keep in contact with your former group members?
 - *If yes, in what context? What do you talk about?
14. Do you want to be a part of a group again? Why/Why not?
 - *If yes, what would be required to rejoin a group?

Theme I Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction

15. Do you feel your involvement in the community changed after joining the MFI group?
 - *If yes, how and why?
16. Have you suffered any major family crises, for example due to loss of livestock, illness in the family, accidents, etc?
 - IF YES,
 - * were you able to manage it with your own resources or did you require outside resources?
 - Probe: what types of access to credit would you have?
 - Probe: were you able to rely on other members of the MFI group? Were you able to rely on other members of other groups you belong to?
 - Probe: do you have insurance?
 - *If yes, were you able to use insurance to deal with this crisis?
17. When you met with your MFI group, did group members tend to share information about economic issues or events going on in or near the community?
 - Researcher: If necessary give an example such as, do you receive information about products that are being sold in nearby towns?
 - Probe, if yes: Did belonging to the MFI group increase the amount of information you had?
18. When you met with your MFI group did group members tend to share information about social services or social issues going on in or near the community?
 - Researcher: If necessary give an example such as, do you hear about doctor visits or vaccination teams?
 - Probe, if yes: Did belonging to the MFI group increase the amount of information you had?

- 19. Is this sort of information valuable to you and the wellbeing of your family? Where do you get such information now?
- 20. Are there any subjects you chose not to share with your group? What/Why?
- 21. If there was one thing you could have changed about the group meetings, what would it be?

Theme II Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skill Building

49. Did you have access to credit prior to joining your MFI group ?

IF YES,

Probe: was this through informal sources – e.g. family or moneylenders – and/or through a ‘formal’ lending program or institution?

Probe: if a program, was that programme one of group lending or individual lending?

*If individual lending, why did you choose to join a group lending project? Do you prefer group or individual lending? Why?

50. Do you have access to credit now?

51. Did all the members of your group always made their loan payments on time?

*If no, What were the consequences for your group?

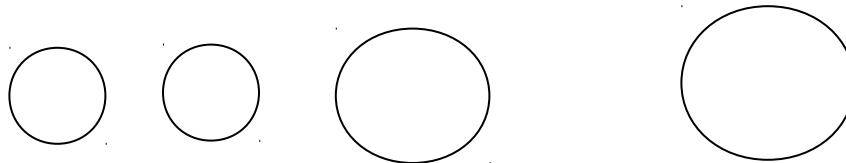
52. If you had the choice for your next loan, would you prefer to take a group loan or an individual loan? Why?

53. We want to understand more about women’s and men’s roles in your community. Did you think that the MFI and the MFI groups were able to make changes in the types of things that are becoming more typical for men and women to do? (Researcher: give example if necessary, e.g., women spending time outside the home)

IF YES,

Probe for what these changes are

54. Researcher: with the respondent, discuss the other groups or associations that they belong to (i.e. other than this MFI group). Start by talking about the groups they belong to now, then ask about those they belonged to before joining the MFI. Probe any changes in the number of types of groups that they belong to before and after joining/leaving the MFI group. You may wish to work with the interviewee by drawing, on a sheet of paper, each of the organisations that they belong to (or cutting up pieces of paper and arranging them). You might want the size of the circle to indicate the importance of the group.



Belong to: Now

now
Before

before

Now

Discuss the different patterns that are appearing. If the interviewee belonged to a group before but not now, why is that, and do the demands of membership from the MFI play any role. It is particularly important to probe whether membership in the MFI had built on earlier groups that the interviewee belonged to, whether belonging to the MFI had substituted for earlier membership or association, how membership in different organisations is complementary or not.

The following questions can also guide the probing:

- * are these groups mainly women's groups or mixed groups?
- * what are the similarities between your MFI groups and the other groups you belong to?
- * what are the differences between your MFI groups and the other groups you belong to?
- * what contributions do you make to those groups? Probe: time, resources, participation in decision making?
 - why do you belong to both?
 - Why do you no longer belong to other groups now that you are a member of the MFI group?

55. Did any of the other members of your MFI group belong to other groups?

Theme III Leveraging Power of Groups

The following questions try to understand the role of the group in catalyzing people's desire to make changes in their situation or community, and how they (and/or the group) have acted on these desires. Try also to probe whether the group tried to voice its concerns to local community leaders or to bring about change in the community.

For the following three questions, adapt them to reflect the issues relevant to the region and culture you are researching. The first question should relate to customs or norms; the second to access to or use of social services, and the third to decision-making in the household. We have listed some examples below, but these should be adapted as appropriate.

56. Was your MFI group interested in making or able to make changes in the following areas:

- a. traditional customs or practices like (e.g. age of marriage, the giving of dowry or multiple wives)?
- b. the availability and use of social services..... (e.g. education, particularly for girls, or health care, or effectiveness of water provision, etc.)
- c. the roles and decision-making of women and men in the household?

* IF YES TO ANY OF THE ABOVE:

Probe:

Did you think about these changes before you joined the MFI group?

Did the MFI staff prompt you to think about these changes?

Was your group able to make any changes in this situation? What was the result – probe: at the individual, family, and community levels?

Did your MFI group achieve this alone or did you work with other groups within the community?

57. Did belonging to the MFI group lead to any changes in your relationship with your husband? How has that change affected you and your family?

58. Do you think your MFI group made any important contributions to the community?

Theme V Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

59. Before you joined the MFI, were there any requirements to join?

60. Now, what obligations or responsibilities do you have to fulfil as a member of your MFI group?

61. Do these obligations affect other responsibilities or other facets of your life? (If necessary probe, for example, due to your weekly meetings, do you have to take time away from other activities?)

62. Are there members of your community that cannot be a part of an MFI group?

*If yes, why?

33. Who do you consider are the poorest in your community? Probe and note their key characteristics.

34. Does the MFI, in your opinion, tend to attract the very poorest of the community?

*If yes, how do they do that?

*If no, why not?

OUTREACH OF OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Note to questioner: this sub-section is trying to place the effectiveness of MFIs within the larger scope of community groups and organisations.

35. Do other associations, organisations or groups in your community primarily reach the poorest people?

36. For those organisations/groups that reach the very poorest, what types of programmes do they run and how are they able to do this?

37. Which organisations reach the poorest women?

38. Are men and women generally targeted/reached by the same groups?

39. Are there some groups or individuals who are excluded from active participation in community decision making?

*If yes, who and why?

Section 6. Dormant Groups Questionnaire

Objective: To understand why groups may have gone dormant. This section may be optional, depending on the MFI.

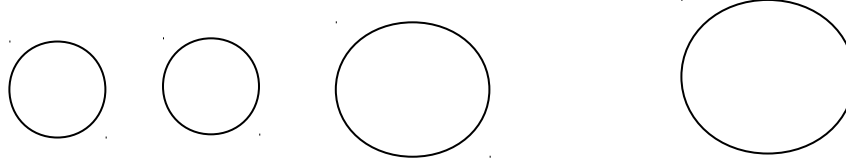
Who to interview: Ascertain with the MFI whether there are any dormant groups in the program. Choose one, preferably within relatively good geographic reach, and/or one that is in a community where there are still other active MFI groups.

Number of interviews: One group session with as many members of the dormant group as possible. Group interview of 1-2 hours.

Tips to researchers:

- No MFI staff should be present at the meeting.
- See Appendix 1 for interview guidelines.

1. How long did your MFI group exist? How long were each of you members of the group?
2. Why is your group no longer active? Probe this in as much detail as possible.
3. What are the two most important benefits you got from being in the group?
 - Probe: Do you still have these benefits? Probe: why or why not?
 - If no benefits: why do you think there were no benefits? Why do the others stay in the group?
4. What were the two biggest costs to being in the group?
5. Do you still keep in contact with your former group members?
 - *If yes, in what context? What do you talk about?
6. Did you share information about social or economic events in and around the community with your group members while the group was active?
63. Researcher: with the participants, discuss the other groups or associations that they belong to (i.e. other than the MFI group). Start by talking about the groups they belong to now, then ask about those they belonged to before joining the MFI. Probe any changes in the number of types of groups that they belong to before and after joining/leaving the MFI group. . You may wish to work with the interviewee by drawing, on a sheet of paper, each of the organisations that they belong to (or cutting up pieces of paper and arranging them). You might want the size of the circle to indicate the importance of the group.



Belong to: Now

now
Before

before

Now

Discuss the different patterns that are appearing. If the interviewee belonged to a group before but not now, why is that, and do the demands of membership from the MFI play any role?. It is particularly important to probe whether membership in the MFI had built on earlier groups that the interviewee belonged to, whether belonging to the MFI had substituted for earlier membership or association, how membership in different organisations is complementary or not.. Probe whether belonging to the MFI group was a reason for dropping out of any other groups, or whether membership in other groups contributed to the MFI becoming dormant.

The following questions can also guide the probing:

- * what are the similarities between your MFI groups and the other groups you belong to?
- * what are the differences between your MFI groups and the other groups you belong to?
- * what contributions do you make to those groups? Probe: time, resources, participation in decision making?
 - why do you belong to both?
 - Why do you no longer belong to other groups now that you are a member of the MFI group?

7. Do you want your group to be active again? Why/Why not?

*If no, do you feel that you have sufficiently benefited from all the microfinance group has to offer?

*If yes, what would be required to reactivate your group?

Section 7. Group Interview with Community Members who are not current or former MFI members

Objective: To understand how other community members perceive the role of the MFI and the role of other community groups, organisations or associations.

Who to interview: With assistance from the community leaders interviewed earlier, and/or other MFI members interviewed earlier, select community members to be interviewed in a group. Consider gender balance in the selection of participants.

Number of interviews: One or two group interview(s), with up to five participants each, in a group interview of 1-2 hours.

Tips to researchers:

- Do not have MFI staff or management present at this group interview.
- Create a ‘neutral’ atmosphere, i.e. assuring the community members that you are not an evaluator looking for positive or negative view of the MFI, but are seeking to understand how the MFI works within the wider community context.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the key economic activities of men and women in the community?
2. What are the most pressing problems or concerns of the community?
3. Who are most affected by these problems? In what way?

Note to questioner: this section aims to determine if changes have occurred in gender equality and attitudes towards gender roles since the formation of MFI groups and if the MFI groups have contributed to these changes. Please probe answers for detail with the issue of determining attribution in mind.

4. In your community, are changes occurring in the types of things that are becoming more typical for women to do, for example, women spending time outside the home, or that women and men are now “allowed” to do?

Probe: In what way?

*Are attitudes towards male and female activities changing for both men and women?

* To what do you think these changes are attributable?

*If yes, what are your feeling about these changes?

Probe: Have you observed any changes in spousal relations among members of your community since the formation of groups?

OUTREACH OF OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Note to questioner: this sub-section is trying to place the effectiveness of MFIs within the larger scope of community groups and organisations.

5. Who do you consider are the poorest in your community? Probe and note their key characteristics.
6. Do organisations, associations or groups in your community reach the poorest in your community?
7. Which organisations reach the poorest women?
8. Are men and women generally targeted/reached by the same groups?
9. Are there some groups or individuals who are excluded from active participation in community decision making?
 - ◆ *If yes, who and why?
10. What do you know about the MFI?
 - ◆ Probe: what benefits or burdens have you seen or heard about? (keep note of whether these are vague impressions or whether they have come through closer association with MFI members)
11. Why have you chosen not to be in the MFI?

Note: for the following two questions, adapt them to reflect the issues relevant to the region and culture you are researching. These are only examples, please elaborate into other social areas like health, family, education where appropriate.

12. Do you think the MFI groups try to change social customs in the community, e.g. are marriage practices, like the age of marriage or the giving of dowry or multiple wives, changing in your community?
13. Another example is education for girls – are attitudes toward this changing?
14. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions of ways to improve the MFI programmes in your community?

SECTION 8 Guidelines for Preparation of the Working Paper

The completed case study is to be submitted in the form of an approximately forty page working paper (with appendices additional to the forty page paper detailing the research methods undertaken and presenting the data collected in the field). The working paper should analyse how qualitative and/or quantitative data from the field research help to substantiate, dispute, or otherwise deepen our understanding of the main hypothesis of the study: **that social intermediation processes of MFIs are necessary to extend their outreach to and within poorer segments of the population, particularly women, and have a separate value in and of themselves by positively enhancing the social capital of the participants.**

It will be of critical importance during the analysis and write-up to deal with the issue of causality. Some improvements in social capital may have been observed during the course of microfinance activities, however, careful analysis is needed when determining whether to attribute these improvements to the MFI/NGO. Researchers will have to give the reader a good sense of what *can* be reasonably attributed to MFI/NGO interventions, what is *likely* to be attributed to the MFI/NGO, and what *cannot* be clearly attributed to MFI/NGO activities. It will very likely not be possible to attribute impacts directly - 100% - on social capital to MFI groups. Researchers must be precise in their language and give the reader a clear sense of the level of confidence in attribution, as well as why that level of confidence exists.

The research manual suggested that the hypothesis could be explored through **five key themes**:

- i. Trust, Sharing and Social Interaction
- ii. Individual Empowerment and Confidence/Skills Building
- iii. Leveraging Power of Groups
- iv. Investigating Ex-clients and Dormant Groups
- v. Outreach to the Poor and Poorest

These themes were to be explored with different stakeholder groups in the study, including MFI staff, community members, group members, and ex-group members. Through such a design, the research set out to gather different stakeholder perspectives on social capital, and the MFI's role and position within broader community social capital. It is expected that the analysis for the case study will compare and contrast these different perspectives on each of the five themes, and the five themes themselves, and thereby come to a more detailed understanding of the value-added of social intermediation processes.

In any research process, issues will arise that were not part of the original study design. The working paper should also make note of this, and in particular should analyse the priority issues raised by members of the community.

The following provides some guidelines/instructions for the researcher(s) when writing up the information collected in the field.

The following summary and annotated Table of Contents is intended to provide a guide to the researchers when writing up the data. It is also intended to provide a broad framework for each of the six case studies so that comparison between them can be made more easily. This should facilitate learning across the case studies.

Table of Contents

Summary:

1. Introduction and Background	1 page
2. Local Context: Political, Economic, Social, Cultural Environment	1-2 pages
3. The MFI/NGO partner and its program	2-3 pages
4. Details on the research methodology used, recording of information	1-2 pages
5. Analysis of data	20-25 pages
6. Key Findings	4-5 pages
7. Recommendations, based on the findings	1 page
8. Conclusion	1 page
TOTAL	31-40 pages
Appendix 1. Lessons learned from the research process	No limit
Appendix 2. Methodology and data collection	No limit

Annotated:

1. Introduction and Background

This section should restate the research objective, from the perspective of each of the individual six case studies (i.e. India, Pakistan, Mali and Kenya studies). This should include a review of the MFI's and/or the researchers' definitions of key terms like 'social capital', 'social intermediation', etc. so that the reader knows at the outset how these key elements of the study are being defined. This may include both explicit definitions, if the MFI has formulated them; it may also discuss whether the 'working definitions' used by the researchers changed over the course of the study. As far as possible, this should be set into a dynamic context; for example, if the MFI objectives include social capital building, then what markers, if any, does it have to show change?

This section should be approximately one page.

2. Local Context: Political, Economic, Social, Cultural Environment

This section should set out the local context for the study, setting the scene by outlining the political and economic, social and cultural environment in which the MFI/NGO has been working over the last several years. This may include: local economic and socio-demographic profiles and issues; comparison with other areas in which the MFI works; particular government policy or regulations affecting the area; and any other issues which are necessary in order to understand the particular context for the case study. For example: Have there been any major economic crises in the state or country, or any political turbulence that would affect microfinance activity or have a bearing on the study? What are the political, economic and social influences and context in which groups are operating? Have there been any relevant national or state regulations affecting microfinance or group activity?

Researchers should also document the traditional or already existing group processes in the studied communities. It will be important to do this consistently across the case-studies, since this provides an 'initial state' into which the MFI/NGO enters. This will also help in understanding attribution of changes to MFI/NGO interventions.

Section 8: Guidelines for Preparation of the Working Paper

The focus should be mainly on the state/region in which the work is being undertaken, and may not necessarily extend to the political, economic or social situation of the country as a whole. Researchers should determine which is more appropriate and relevant to the study.

This should be approximately 1-2 pages

3. The MFI/NGO partner and its program

This section should introduce the MFI/NGO partner in the case study. This will require a concise, yet comprehensive, review of the key current and historical information needed to understand:

- the objectives or the mission statement of the organisation;
- policies of the organisation relevant to the development of social capital or linkages with partners in social capital formation;
- the types of products, services and/or activities undertaken; in the case of integrated programs, the focus should be on the microfinance activities, however, it may be necessary to understand the linkages between these and other aspects of an integrated program
- policies and practice (including staffing issues) regarding group development and relationships;
- the ‘leveraging ability’ of the MFI/NGO beyond the village, e.g., how reputation may give the organisation more clout, or make it more attractive for prospective members, or give it a stronger voice with other organisations or officials
- other issues relevant to the study.

What will be particularly important is an understanding of the dynamics of any of the items below, particularly for older programs. For example, did early practice lead the MFI/NGO to modify its approach to group development, why, and what were the consequences?

This section should be no longer than 2-3 pages.

4. Details on the research methodology used, recording of information

This section should provide a summary of the more detailed review of research methods and data that will be presented in the appendices. See below for guidelines on the appendices.

Since this section is a summary, it should be approximately 1-2 pages.

5. Analysis of data

This will form the bulk of the paper. Recall that the field manual organised the information collection according to (a) five key themes and (b) various different stakeholder categories (MFI staff, community members, group members, ex-group members).

At one level, this will allow analysis of each of the five themes according to the perspectives of the different stakeholder categories. Are there similarities or differences expressed by different categories, and why? Are there similarities or differences expressed by different people within the same category, and why? What do the emerging patterns, or lack of patterns, tell us about the hypothesis? For example, the first section would be trust, sharing and social interaction. The researchers would provide an analysis of this theme, based on the results from each set of questions on trust, sharing and social interaction in sections 1-7 in the manual. This involves bringing together all the responses and data received from interviews with MFI staff on the trust theme all the way through to interviews with community members who are not current or former MFI members

Section 8: Guidelines for Preparation of the Working Paper

Another level is to analyze how each of the five themes contribute to our understanding of the hypothesis. Recall that each of the five themes asks questions along that particular theme, yet there are connections and similarities between the five themes. The data should be analysed carefully to understand if a consistent picture is emerging across the five themes. This should then be related back to the main hypothesis. If there are divergences between the five themes, these should also be analysed carefully, and/or reviewed in terms of which of the stakeholder groups are showing such divergences.

A cross-cutting level of analysis will be that of quantitative and qualitative data. Again, the analysis should seek to understand whether the information emerging from the more quantitative instruments (e.g. survey questionnaires) and the qualitative instruments (e.g. focus group discussions) reveal similar or dissimilar messages, why this might be the case, and how this informs an understanding of the hypothesis. Another cross-cutting level of analysis is the exploration of unanticipated responses and their implications for the main hypothesis.

For all the levels of analysis suggested above, it is recognised that the small sample sizes mean that care must be taken in terms of extracting generalities from the data. This is also where it will be important in the analysis to relate findings back to the context (Section 2) and the MFI program (Section 3).

To facilitate comparison between the six different case studies, it is recommended that the researchers organise the analysis by each of the five themes. Following this, there may be more general analysis of findings. In addition to an analysis of the data for each theme, there should also be a comprehensive analysis of the priority issues raised by members of the community, placing them within a theme if possible.

At the end of the study it is advised that the researchers return to the communities and discuss their findings with the villages. Alternatively, the MFI/NGO can also do this. A review of the feedback of the communities should also be presented in the analysis.

The analysis section should form the bulk of the paper amounting to 20 –25 pages approximately.

6. Key Findings

This section should draw on the above analysis and summarise the key findings from the analysis. It should draw some main conclusions relating back to the hypothesis and across the five themes. This section should also seek to understand the ‘big picture’ questions that have provided the rationale for the study. As pointed out throughout the field research manual, key questions to consider include:

- What is the impact of social capital?
- Is it worth the investment?
- Do MFI group lending processes foster social capital? If so, to what extent?
- Are social intermediation processes if MFIs/NGOs necessary to extend their outreach to and within poorer segments of the population, particularly women?
- Do they have a separate value in and of themselves by positively enhancing the social capital of participants?
- Do microfinance initiatives implemented through group lending schemes bring clients benefits over and above those of an individual loan?
- Are microfinance groups (as a form of social capital) truly new, positive and additional to the existing institutional landscape?

Section 8: Guidelines for Preparation of the Working Paper

- What characteristics distinguish them from other groups, particularly regarding the inclusion of the poorest and most disadvantaged?
- What are some of the key features and causes of the processes involved?

This section should be 4-5 pages long.

7. Recommendations, based on the findings

In this section, the researchers are encouraged to make recommendations in a more general manner about possible new directions that any MFI/NGO might consider. This of course may apply directly to the MFI/NGO that has been part of the study, and the way in which it could improve its own performance. However, the section should focus more on the researchers' recommendations for improving impact on social capital in general, given their knowledge and understanding of social intermediation processing. This section therefore might be more exploratory in nature, suggesting new ideas, directions and approaches to microfinance.

This section should be concise and no more than 1 page long.

8. Conclusion

This should briefly restate key issues and findings of the study. It should be approximately one page.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Lessons learned from the research process

As discussed during the research inception workshops, these six case studies are piloting research instruments to investigate the links between microfinance and social capital formation. We, and a number of international donors, are interested in doing more work on this critical development issue. Therefore, feedback on the research instruments and methodology is essential to understand both their strengths and their shortcomings. This appendix therefore should bring together some of the lessons learned about the process in which the study was undertaken, what went well, methodology issues, what data is data reliable, unreliable, etc, what could have been improved, done differently and so on.

Given the important nature of this section, researchers are asked to be as frank and detailed as possible, and therefore no page limits are suggested.

Appendix 2. Methodology and data collection

In order to have as complete as possible case studies (both for comparisons between case studies and potential future work), the researchers are asked to submit in an appendix details of the research methodology and data. It is not expected that this section will generate additional work for the research teams. Rather it should be a compilation of the notes and raw data gathered by the team.

This should include:

- Information on the villages included in the case study.
- Details on the interviews including number of people who were interviewed, who participated in the discussion groups, etc.

Section 8: Guidelines for Preparation of the Working Paper

- Details on selection of groups, sample size, rationale for choice, how communities have been selected and so on.
- Details on data that has been objectively verified, e.g. through consultation of minutes taken at meetings, logbooks of groups, village statistics (e.g. children enrolled in school, health statistics) and data kept by the MFI on client history, number of loans taken, age, marital status etc.
- Any aggregation of data (e.g. of individual questionnaires) should be included in the appendix, even if it is decided not to use those tables or information in the main text.
- Notes on and/or initial analysis of focus group discussions.
- Wealth ranking and social capital diagrams.
- This section should also provide details on any research biases found by the researchers.

Appendix 1. Case Study Approaches and Methodology

PRINCIPLES

While the following research principles are likely to be very familiar to you, the researcher, it was felt that they should be briefly reiterated at the outset. To obtain the most accurate results in this study it is imperative to maintain good relations with the community members, and the community as a whole, that each researcher is interviewing. Begin each session by introducing yourself to the group or individual and explaining your work, be very pleasant and respectful of the community members at all times. Always assure the community members of complete confidentiality after introducing yourself and make them feel at ease; tell them that they need not answer any questions with which they are uncomfortable and do not probe a topic if it is clear that the interviewee does not wish to discuss it. Be aware of the value of the time of those you are interviewing and be certain to make it known that you value their sacrifice of time, thank them both at the beginning and at the end of each session.

RECORDING OF INFORMATION

Information should be recorded in as much detail as possible and should include more than the words used by the participants – tones of voice, facial expressions and cultural idioms are all important for final analysis. It is important to ensure that information is recorded each day; information stored in one's memory quickly fades and key words or details may be lost in delays. Daily recording also facilitates the easy spotting of information gaps and missed sections; the sooner these are noted, the simpler it is to return the next day to fill them. It is often useful to have the questionnaires checked at the end of each day by another member of the research team as oversights are easier to pick out in another's work.

HOW TO CONDUCT INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Individual interviews should always be conducted at the convenience of the community member being interviewed. Always hold the interview at a location preferable to the interviewee, do not ask them to come to you for the researcher should make the interview as easy and accessible as possible. Try to keep each interview to a maximum of about an hour; longer interviews will lose the interest of the interviewees and will infringe on the value of their time. Be very sensitive to the comfort levels of the community members you are interviewing; if a line of questioning seems to bother them, try to substitute the questions using more indirect methods, if they are still clearly uncomfortable with the subject, move on – it is not worth sacrificing the accuracy of the rest of the questionnaire nor is it polite to probe a delicate issue. If the focus group discussion member have not already been selected, some community members may, during the course of the interviews, strike you as good potential members; be certain to note this immediately to ensure that you do not forget their names and the reasons you thought to select them.

HOW TO CONDUCT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS²

What Is A Focus Group Discussion?

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) is a relatively new technique for data collection. In contrast to more traditional quantitative survey techniques, it is used to collect qualitative data. Thus it provides descriptive information rather than numbers and figures.

A FGD is a kind of group discussion where 7-12 homogeneous participants discuss a particular issue. The FGD is lead by a facilitator who presents the questions to the group and facilitates (but does not guide or dominate) the discussion, by probing (not prompting) and helping the group explore the issues in depth.

The entire FGD is recorded to allow the researcher to produce a full transcription and thus examine all that was said and discussed, including the group dynamics.

Thus, the “Focus” in Focus Group Discussion describes the importance of focusing on a few key (generally related) issues.

When is a Focus Group Discussion Useful/Applicable?

FGDs allow the collection of a relatively large amount of data in a relatively short period of time. They also allow more in-depth examination of issues through the dynamics of a peer-group discussion. FGDs are therefore useful when qualitative or descriptive data and/or when detailed information is required in a short period of time.

How to Conduct A Focus Group Discussion

1. Remember: The purpose of the FGD should be clearly explained: outline the objectives of the research and explain that the clients will benefit from this research as [the MFI] will gain important information that will allow the organisation to improve the quality of the financial services it provides to the members.
2. The moderator’s role at this stage is to promote discussion through questions and to listen and learn not to lecture and teach. In addition the assistant moderator will take notes, play the role of “gate-keeper” and manage the logistics of the FGD (ensure that the cassette is turned when it ends, ensure that the cassette recorder is always running, etc.)
3. Questionnaire Preparation: Prepare a set of questions for the FGD. The questions should not be “closed questions” (that can be answered “yes” or “no” or in a single word), but rather “open-ended” ones that promote descriptive answers and discussion among the group.
4. Pre-Test of the Questionnaire: Conduct a “mock” FGD in the field with participants similar to those that will eventually participate in the FGD. This pre-test will provide an opportunity to develop a mock tally-sheet and to conduct initial analysis to examine whether the FGD will meet the project’s needs and provide the information required. This, in turn, may lead to options to omit some questions or include additional questions that must be included in the questionnaire.

² SOURCE: “Contribution to World Development Report 2001 : Vulnerability, Risks, Assests and Empowerment – the Impact of Microfinance on Poverty Alleviation, Final Report” March 1999, Graham A.N. Wright, Deborah Kasente, Germina Ssemogeree, Leonarch Mutesasira.

5. Site and Participant Selection: Visit the community and place where FGD is to be conducted, and if necessary, talk to the community leaders to explain why the FGD is to be held, etc. Select a quiet place to conduct the discussion, and select and make appointments with the FGD participants.
6. Preparing for the FGD: The moderator and assistant moderator will need the following at the FGD: a) the questionnaire, b) pencil/pen, c) note pad, d) name cards for each of the participants, e) cassette recorder, and f) an extra set of batteries.
7. Conducting the Discussion:
 - Participants and Venue: Gather together a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 12 participants: a homogeneous group (but ideally not relatives). The FGD should be held in a quiet, non-threatening and relaxed environment. FGD generally last around 2 hours.
 - Moderator's Role: The moderator should pose the questions and facilitate (not guide or dominate) the discussion. At the same time, the moderator must ensure that the GD remains "focused" (e.g. no side-tracks or multiple discussions), and that all participants take part in the discussion. The moderator must try to ensure that all participants remain interested and involved in the discussion. Finally, the moderator should take notes of key points, body language within the group, group dynamics, etc. to help him/her with the interpretation of the data collected.
 - Assistant Moderator: The assistant moderator must ensure that the discussion is properly recorded, that the cassette or batteries are changed whenever necessary. In addition, the assistant moderator should also keep notes of key points, etc. Finally, the assistant moderator should play the role of "sentry" or "guardian" to maintain the discussion within the group and to keep those not in the group visiting to observe the procedures from answering questions and interrupting.

The above description of how to conduct a Focus Group Discussion was drawn from a report on a poverty alleviation study done with MicroSave-Africa and Uganda Women's Finance Trust. The majority of its instructions are also applicable to the social intermediation study, however, a few key differences should be noted. First the composition of the focus groups needs not be entirely homogeneous. Diversity of experience and opinions will lead to improved and more thought provoking discussion as well as more varied and accurate results. Having said that, the discussion facilitator must ensure that the selection of focus group members is done wisely, avoiding clashes that will compromise the quality or sanctity of the discussion and combining individuals that may intimidate each other. For example, a discussion amongst primarily lower class community women should not include the wives of community leaders, for the lower class women may feel intimidated and may not voice their true concerns. Another issue of note is the questions posed in the discussion and the existence of a questionnaire; to allow the group more flexibility in discussing issues of importance to them, the focus group section of this field guide is limited to specific themes that should be covered with a few suggested topics and questions that could be posed to initiate or probe certain issues. While discussions should not be allowed to run wild or stray too far from the topic of social capital and microfinance, the theme-based instructions should give the group more leeway in expressing their needs and opinions on the issues at hand.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The recent adoption of participatory research in developing countries has added depth to the understanding of poverty and its causes. In many cases, the percentage of the population that is considered to be “poor” or “very poor” is relatively constant in participatory and non-participatory studies, however, participatory research is better able to gauge the needs of the poor and the contributing factors of poverty. While the quantitative results, therefore, are similar, the qualitative findings are more beneficial in determining feasible and sustainable projects or growth schemes.

Box 1.1: How much....?

In order to assess water usage in rural areas women were questioned about the typical amount of water they fetched from the well each day. The amount varied depending on the day’s activities, the amount of washing, the presence of guests and other factors so women could generally not give a typical amount – they did not remember nor did they take note of it. In such cases, research could be done from a different angle to yield the desired results. One could examine the containers women use to transport water from the nearest source to their homes and observe the activities of a small number of women over the course of a week, thus determining a rough average of water use.
SOURCE: Towards Participatory Research, Deepa Narayan

These findings have relevance for our work on social intermediation and social capital formation because they allow us to understand the dynamics and causes of assessment processes so that this knowledge can be fed back into improved programming and study implementation. Participatory research is considered to yield superior results by giving the participants some control over the methodology and direction of the study, enabling their felt needs and concerns to rise to the surface of the finalised results and thus lead to programme development enhancements.

Participatory research is, however, not without its drawbacks and difficulties. It is more costly and time consuming than non-participatory research. Questions must be carefully designed and screened to avoid intentionally false responses; the desire to misinform is generally not maliciously intended but is rather based on a desire to please, to appear knowledgeable, to give the seemingly “correct” answer, or to give answers that would result in their being recipients of aid. In other cases, many do not see the relevance of certain questions and simply do not know (see box 1.1).

PARTICIPATORY METHODS FOR THIS STUDY

In addition to carefully designed questions, much of the success of the study depends on the work of the local researcher. The researcher must be able to adapt his/her questions and questioning technique to the responses and reactions of the interviewee; the researcher must probe gently when issues appear to be sensitive and ask questions in an indirect manor to achieve accurate results. He/she should use the questionnaires provided as guidelines but also elaborate on issues that seem important and use the answers of the respondents to tailor additional questioning. Another important participatory technique in studies such as these is observation.

Further to conducting interviews and focus group discussions, during the researcher's time in a community he/she should spend time discreetly observing the social interaction and activities of the community members. Everyday life and customary affairs will shed light on the accuracy of the responses obtained and should be used to enhance the researcher's work.

The researcher must be cognisant of the possible reactions of those that he/she is interviewing depending on the particular information seeking methodology that is being employed. For example, during the focus group discussions, the researcher must be aware of the effects of group dynamics and group interaction, which is often dependent on the social status of each of the members of the focus groups. If the wives of the community leaders are interspersed with local women of lower rank, the possibility of an intimidation bias must be considered that the researcher should do all that is possible to discount for it. Additionally, focus group discussions are typically dominated by those with the most confidence and ability to speak, not necessarily by those with the most to say; the researcher or the facilitator of the discussion should encourage all members of the group to speak and ensure that all views are heard. When interviewing the

staff of MFIs, the researcher should be aware that it is in their best interest to make their programme appear successful and beneficial. The questions and the probing of answers should reflect this awareness; indirect questioning in combination with some leading questions should aid in obtaining an accurate observation of the efficiency of the organisation. In conducting individual interviews, the researcher must first put the interviewee at ease to make them comfortable and able to give truthful responses; this can be done through an introduction of the researcher, the study and its objectives followed by an assurance of confidentiality

and a disassociation of the study from their MFI. If the individual believes that the researcher represents the MFI, he/she may aim to please and fail to mention any difficulties or problems he/she perceives in the MFI programme for fear of being excluded from it in the future.

The planner or manager of a participatory study is analogous to a photographer who is on assignment to shoot a photo essay of a community. With a limited supply of film, the photographer must carefully plan what situations to focus on, what lens to use, where to stand relative to the subject, and on what aspect of the community to concentrate in order to tell the story. Planning the shoot in advance, the photographer must be ready to adapt, adjusting the shooting strategy to accommodate or to take advantage of the unexpected and unplanned.

No single picture will give a composite understanding of the community being studied. Standing rooted in one place, the photographer's perspective becomes limited by the unchanging nature of her position. When taking pictures of people, rather than objects or landscape, the photographer is presented with new challenges, because people may react to her presence in unpredictable ways. Accordingly, she must learn to adopt strategies to minimise the negative effects created by her own involvement.

So it is with the researcher. Like the photographer with a limited supply of film, participatory researchers do not have the luxury of unlimited time and resources. By carefully defining the purpose of the study, they know what issues are important, what must be focused on and what types of information are vital.

SOURCE: Toward Participatory Research, Deepa Narayan

Wealth Ranking

The following is a detailed guideline for wealth ranking, which was used for World Development Report 2000/01 studies on the Impact of Microfinance on Poverty Alleviation.³

What is wealth ranking?

Wealth ranking is a way of finding out about wealth and poverty in a village or other small community.

What does wealth ranking give us?

It gives us two main things:

3. An understanding of *in what way* and *why* the rich are rich and the poor are poor, as seen by the members of the village
4. A 'ranking' of the households in the village, from the richest to the poorest, as seen by the members of the village

How does it differ from other ways of investigating wealth and poverty?

It uses the *values* and *opinions* and *knowledge* of the villagers themselves: our own values and opinions and prejudices are not involved at all

How is wealth ranking done?

25. Obtain an unambiguous and complete list of the names of the households in the community you are investigating (around 20 households in number)
26. Write each name clearly on one small card: shuffle them to obliterate any 'order' in the names when they were given to you
27. Choose your first 'respondent': it doesn't matter if it is a man or a woman, or rich or poor, or old or young, but the respondent should be a permanent resident, and know all the households, and have an hour of time to give you
28. Choose a place to do the ranking: inside away from the wind and rain with a flat space to lay out the cards is best
29. Make your respondent feel comfortable and at ease with you: check that she believes that in her village some households are poorer than others
30. Remove the respondent's card from the pile of cards for the time being
31. Choose two cards at random and ask the respondent 'which of these two is poorer than the other?' (if your respondent is illiterate you will constantly have to repeat the names)
32. If she says 'both are the same', probe a bit more: if she insists, place the two cards together side by side...
33. ...but if she says 'X is poorer than Y' then put X beneath Y
34. Ask, *in what way* is X poorer than Y? and note the answer on X's card (the answers to this question will tell you the respondent's understanding of the *dimensions* of poverty)
35. Ask, *why* is X poorer than Y? and note the answer in your notebook (the answers to this question will tell you the respondent's understanding of the *causes* of poverty)
36. Never never never *prompt* the respondent: do **not** say 'for example, do they have more heifer...?' or 'for example, did they inherit the land...?' We want the respondent's opinion, not our own
37. Now produce the next card. Ask how it compares to X, then to Y. Place it above other cards of households poorer than it, and beneath households richer than it: again, note 'in what way' and 'why' the household is richer or poorer
38. Continue until all the cards (ending with the respondent's own card) are done
39. Make a final check of the order of the cards with the respondent: she may want to change her mind: if she is illiterate, read them all out to her

³ Grateful acknowledgement to Graham Wright and Monique Cohen for providing background documents on the WDR consultations.

40. Mark the cards, starting with '1' (or '1=') for the richest (note: if there are two households that are equal first, the next will be numbered 3rd, and so on)
41. Ask her to identify on the cards which households she has a reciprocal interest-free lending relationship with: mark the cards with 'b' for the ones she borrows from, 'l' for the ones she lends to, 'bl' if she does both
42. Thank her. Ask her if she has any questions. Answer them honestly.
43. Choose your second respondent. Choose a man if the first respondent was a woman, rich if the first was poor, old if the first was young, and so on
44. Make fresh cards and repeat steps 4 to 18 inclusive with the second respondent
45. Choose a third respondent and repeat steps 4 to 18 inclusive
46. Back in your office, compare the three results - if they are broadly similar you've probably done well, if they are violently different then there's been some mistake
47. Add up the total score for each household: for example a very rich household may have been ranked 1st by one respondent, 3rd by the second respondent and 3rd = by the third respondent: that household's combined score will be seven (1 + 3 + 3)
48. List the households with the one(s) with the smallest score (the richest) at the top and the one(s) with the highest score (the poorest) at the bottom

Example of Wealth Ranking Output (from the Cordillera in the Philippines)

We selected Mrs Abboc as a middle-income well-informed villager able to carry out a **wealth ranking of part of the Bawan sitio**. The list of households was obtained from the sitio health worker and covers one geographical part of, not all of, the sitio. The results are tabulated below.

Wealth Rank	Name of head of household	Notes
1 st	Romeo Lingayo	household of Respondent 50: they both have salaries as government teachers; they own a power tiller, several carabao, rice fields, pastures, coffee plantations and maize fields: are immigrants who bought land
2 nd	Alfredo Magiwaw	'many' rice fields, 'many' carabao, a power tiller, pastures and gold ornaments
3 rd	Gavina AmilingX ^{LB}	'many' rice fields, several carabao, coffee plantations, gold ornaments: is a widow
4 th =	Rufina Ga-anoX ^{LB} Anthony Lambayong Bernando Lingbawan Juan Codiam Lovino Dulyongan Admerador Gu-oban Federico Lambayong Lorenzo Bulawit	rice fields and coffee but no carabao wife is a teacher; have carabaos, rice fields educated, has a job as a highway guard; has carabao and rice fields rice fields but no other land nor animals rice fields plus pasture plus coffee 'baknang' but no carabao rice fields and carabao but uneducated
12 th =	Carlos Wannas Marcos Saliw-an	fewer rice fields but coffee and carabaos some rice fields, two carabao
14 th =	Elpidio Awingan Albina DulyonganX ^{LB} Mario Bayog Benedicto Abboc Ricardo LatawanX ^{LB} Severo Dulyongan Bobby Go-oban William Dulyongan	a widow husband of RESPONDENT a little rice land, some coffee, a carabao inherited as did William (see below) some rice fields; gold ornaments a little rice land, some coffee (see Severo above)

22 nd =	Ferdinand Wackisan	Immigrant
	Dulyongan Langbisan	immigrant; some rice land and coffee; already gave land to sons
	Nicolas Tallongon	
	Smith Malyongan	immigrant's son: got some land from father Langbisan (above)
	Modesto Dulangon	a little rice land and coffee
28 th =	George Guiawan	a little rice land
	Aurelio Tallangon	very little land
	Pablo Basitad	was landless immigrant
31 st =	Marvin Mabborang	immigrant, no rice land (but his wife has a little)
	Victor Massagan	landless; son of Rosalina (below)
	Rosalina Bayog ^{X^L}	landless; works swidden and day labours; a widow
	Antonio Diwag	Landless
	Ayongdo Bangcod	landless; depends on swidden
	Eduardo Sungday	landless; brother of Alexander (below)
	Alexander Sangday	Landless
	Dupali Waggas	landless

- ◆ ^{X^{LB}} indicates that the household is in the reciprocal lending group of Mrs Abboc, the Respondent. 'L' indicates she lent to that household within the last year, 'B' that she borrowed: 'LB' that she both lent and borrowed.

DOCUMENTATION AND RECORDING OF FIELD NOTES⁴

Proper recording of all the discussions and the visual outputs is of crucial importance in the documentation process. This is the basic data that can be used for analysis and synthesis. Given the huge quantum of information and analysis that is generated during a participatory appraisal, it is very easy to lose and forget a lot of it, if it is not recorded immediately in the field. It is for this reason that the role of the documentor is very important to the team. The following should be kept in mind while recording field notes:

- It is good to start by requesting permission from the participants to take notes.
- If for any reason it is not possible to take notes during a discussion, this should be done at the first opportunity available. It is impossible to recall any discussion in full and important points may be lost if the recording is left for long.
- Record key phrases and terminology in the local language.
- Ensure definitions of key terms used are elicited from the participants.
- Carefully copy all visual analysis on paper.
- Don't try to "beautify" the visual. Try to retain as much of the original features as possible.
- Record all of the participants on the visual outputs. If it is sensitive to ask for or to record the names of the participants, record the number and composition of the group.
- Record important background on who participated in the analysis – older men, younger women, children, boys not in school, better-off women, etc.
- Record the date, time and place.
- Don't make visuals of your own. If you are presenting data that was only discussed verbally – it is best to write in narrative style. If you do make visuals in your notes (presenting discussions for

⁴ SOURCE: Consultations With the Poor: Process Guide for the 20 Country Study for the World Development Report 2000/01, Poverty Group, The World Bank

which the participants did not prepare a visual), state clearly that this is your presentation and not that of the participants.

- Don't forget that the analysis is not complete until the visual is discussed and analysed by the group. Probe and ask questions after the participants have finished preparing the visual. Record the questions asked and the responses given. If there are any arguments or disagreements among the participants, these should be recorded as well.
- Be careful to be factual while recording. Record what was said or explained, rather than what you think was implied.
- While recording the visual outputs make sure to have notes on the symbols or methods they have used (e.g. if using ranking, explain whether 1=best or 1=worst, etc.)
- Any stories, anecdotes, or case studies should also be recorded as these provide supporting information to the analysis carried out in groups.

APPENDIX 2. SETTING UP FIELD RESEARCH

Who to interview	Method	Purpose	EXAMPLE: No./hrs per comm'ty	No./hrs per comm'ty	Total overall
Section 1. MFI operational staff	Group interview	Understand communities before beginning field research	1*1 hr Tot: 1 hr		
Section 2. Community leaders	Group interview, up to 5 people	Understand social capital in community and impact of MFI	1* 1-2 hrs Tot: 1-2 hrs		
Section 3. c. Community members d. MFI group mbs	Groups of 3-5, PRA * wealth ranking * social capital	Understand social classifications and existing institutional structure and its reach	1*2-3 hrs Tot: 2-3 hrs 1*2-3 hrs Tot: 2-3 hrs		
Section 4. MFI group mbs	Individual interviews	Explore 5 key themes	10*1 hr Tot: 10 hrs		
Section 5. Ex-clients	Individual interviews	Explore 5 key themes from different perspective	3-5* 1 hr Tot: 3-5 hrs		
Section 6. Dormant group (if applicable)	Group interview	Understand why dormancy occurs.	(1* 2hrs) (Tot: 2 hrs)		
Section 7. Non MFI members	Group interview	Explore 5 key themes from different perspective	1-2* 2 hr Tot: 2-4 hrs		
Travel between communities (estimate)			½ day		
ESTIMATED TOTAL (in hours and person days (p.d.))			25-34 hrs 3-4.25 p.d.		